

ITEM 9-C

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable President and
Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas
Planning Services Manager

Date: February 13, 2012

Re: Review and Comment on Staff's Responses to the Regional Sustainable
Communities Strategy – Alternative Scenarios

BACKGROUND

In January and February of 2011, staff provided an overview of Senate Bill 375, the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and the effect of the law on the City of Alameda and the Bay Area as a region to the Planning Board and City Council. Those reports described the multi-year process that the region is embarking on to create a Regional Plan to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, as mandated by SB 375. In March of 2011, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) released the "Initial Vision Scenario" for public discussion. In April and May of 2011, the Planning Board and City Council provided comments on the Initial Vision Scenario. The City of Alameda's May 2011 comments on the Vision Scenario are attached as to this report (Attachment 1).

In July of 2011, ABAG and MTC began work on the next step in this regional planning process, which included the development of a series of four additional "alternative" scenarios for regional review and comment. The purpose of the alternatives analysis is to identify the environmental, social, and economic consequences of different land use and transportation strategies for the Bay Area over a 30-year period. A detailed description of the five alternatives and results of the evaluations is available for public review at http://www.onebayarea.org/plan_bay_area/. This report includes a summary description of the Alternative Scenarios (Attachment 2) and the summary findings of the scenario evaluations (Attachment 3).

At the request of ABAG and MTC, each City was asked to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives by January 20, 2012. ABAG and MTC will use the comments received from all the various jurisdictions in the Bay Area to develop a "Preferred Alternative" for the regional SCS. Alameda staff's January 20th responses to the ABAG survey are attached as Attachment 4.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Planning Board and the Alameda community with an update on this important regional planning process and provide an opportunity to review Alameda staff's comments on the Alternatives. Staff will transmit any additional comments or correction received at the Planning Board meeting to ABAG

immediately so that ABAG may be able to use the information to further influence the upcoming “preferred alternative” which is expected to be released in March 2012.

DISCUSSION

The primary goal of the SCS is to build a future Bay Area that will thrive and prosper under the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century. By directly confronting the challenges associated with population growth, climate change, new economic conditions, and an increasing public-health imperative, the SCS will attempt to ensure a Bay Area, which is both livable and economically competitive. According to MTC and ABAG, a successful SCS will:

- Recognize and support compact walkable places where residents and workers have access to services and amenities to meet their day-to-day needs;
- Reduce long commutes and decrease reliance that increases energy independence and decreases the region’s carbon consumption;
- Support complete communities that remain livable and affordable for all segments of the population, maintaining the Bay Area as an attractive place to reside, start or continue a business, and create jobs.
- Support a sustainable transportation system that maximizes the use of the existing infrastructure, reduces the region’s reliance on automobiles, and promotes transit expansions;
- Provide increased accessibility and affordability to our most vulnerable populations;
- Conserve water and decrease our dependence on imported food stocks and their high transport costs;
- Provide adequate capacity for goods movement;
- Adapt to sea level rise and other issues; and
- Preserve agricultural and natural lands i.e. “green fields”.

In July of 2011 and in response to the comments received on the Initial Vision Scenario from the region’s various jurisdictions, ABAG’s Executive Board and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission approved a framework for Five Alternative Scenarios to be used to inform the development of the Preferred Scenario of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). Scenarios 1 (“**Initial Vision Scenario**”) and Scenario 2 (“**Unconstrained Core Concentration**”) are “unconstrained growth” scenarios that assume very strong employment growth and unprecedented funding to support housing affordability. The Core Concentration Unconstrained scenario provided a more concentrated development pattern along transit corridors than the Vision Scenario. These two scenarios were intended to identify the challenges and policies for an ideal sustainable development path from a regional perspective.

According to AGAG, scenarios 3, 4, and 5 were created to evaluate growth patterns that are “constrained” by economic growth, financial feasibility, and reasonable planning constraints. These three scenarios assume a strong economy supported by the appropriate affordable housing production. They also assume targeted local and regional strategies and additional funding to support sustainable and equitable growth. They are designed primarily around Priority Development Areas and Growth Opportunity Areas, as places for growth identified by local jurisdictions. (The City of Alameda has identified the former Naval Air Station and the Northern Waterfront as Priority Development and Growth Opportunity Areas in Alameda).

Scenario 3 (“**Core Concentration Growth**”) concentrates housing and job growth at selected Priority Development Areas in the Inner Bay Area along the region’s core transit network. Scenario 4 (“**Focused Growth Scenario**”) recognizes the potential of Priority Development Areas and Growth Opportunity Areas across the region with an emphasis on housing and job growth along major transit corridors. Scenario 5 (“**Outer Bay Area Growth**”) addresses higher levels of growth in the outer Bay Area and is closer to previous development trends than the other two scenarios.

Each scenario includes specific projections for housing production and job growth for Alameda. The Initial Vision Scenario and the Unconstrained Core Concentration Scenarios both include housing projections that far exceed the number of units that have been anticipated in the Alameda General Plan and Housing Element. The 2009 Transportation Element EIR considered the potential traffic impacts of approximately 4,800 units over 30 years. The Initial Vision Scenario projected household growth of almost 9,000 households and the Unconstrained Core Concentration projected 18,000 new households in Alameda.

Of the three “constrained” scenarios, the Focused Growth Scenario is the closest to the projections that the City has used in the past when projecting housing unit projection in Alameda over 30 years. The Focus Growth Scenario projects that between 2010 and 2040, the number of housing units in Alameda would increase from 30,123 to 35,935 and the number of jobs would increase from 26,489 to 34,709.

Alameda Staff Comments on Alternative Scenarios

ABAG requested that each jurisdiction respond to five (5) specific questions based upon a review of the Alternatives and the evaluation. Staff reviewed the alternatives and the evaluations and provided the following responses to the following five questions.

1. Given your knowledge of the SCS, regional issues, growth distribution within the scenario, and the relative performance in the targets and equity analysis, which of the five scenarios do you feel best accomplishes regional goals?

Alameda Staff 1/20/2012 Response:

The Focused Growth and Constrained Core Concentration scenarios are the two best scenarios of the five from a regional perspective. The two scenarios are the best of the five at reducing green house gases emissions, which is the primary source of Global Warming, which is the primary reason the people of California supported SB 375 and the most important issue facing future generation of Californians. These two scenarios also do a good job of reducing VMT per person, which is extremely important. The Focused Growth and Constrained Core also performed the best in terms of reducing premature deaths from particulate emissions and minimizing injuries and fatalities from collisions (also important to the people of California).

The two “unconstrained” scenarios (Initial Vision and Core Concentration) provide an interesting theoretical exercise about what could happen if resources were unconstrained, but it is very difficult to seriously consider scenarios that assume that unlimited financial resources will be available to provide the transportation and infrastructure support that would be necessary for these scenarios. For that reason, neither unconstrained scenario ranks very high.

2. Which of the five scenarios do you feel best accomplishes local goals? Please rate the scenarios below.

Alameda Staff 1/20/2012 Response:

The Focused Growth scenario is the best scenario of the five from a local, City of Alameda perspective for many of the same reasons. Climate change, reducing green house gas emissions, and reducing VMT per person is of primary importance to the Alameda community. Reducing premature deaths from emissions and minimizing fatalities from collisions is also extremely important.

Creating jobs and increasing economic development opportunities in Alameda is also an important local goal. The City of Alameda lost over 16,000 jobs with the departure of the closing of the Naval Air Station in 1993, and the City is still working to replace those jobs. The Focused Growth Scenario housing target for Alameda is extremely aggressive and will not be achievable without support from the region and state for the transportation and infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to support the Focused Growth Scenario. In contrast, the Focused Growth Scenario underestimates the opportunities to provide jobs in Alameda at Alameda Point, Marina Village Business Park, and the Harbor Bay Business Park and in Alameda’s two main streets commercial, mixed use corridors.

The two unconstrained scenarios are very problematic for Alameda. Without significant regional and state funding for transportation and infrastructure improvements as well as funding to address sea level rise, the City of Alameda’s ability to accommodated significant amounts of new housing or new employment opportunities will be severely constrained. The unconstrained Core Concentration scenario and Initial Vision Scenario appears to assume that the former Naval Air Station at Alameda Point is an

unconstrained opportunity. In addition to the lack of transportation system capacity, of the 1,444 acres at Alameda Point, 995 acres of the property are Tidelands Lands that can not be used, rented, or sold for residential use by State Law. Of the remaining 449 acres of non-tidelands lands, approximately 225 acres are within the National Eligible NAS Historic District. This leaves about 224 acres of land that is currently occupied by buildings and viable employment generating businesses. The secondary impact of this misconception about Alameda Point is that, the unconstrained scenarios, if adopted, would force the City of Alameda to rezone more and more employment generating land for residential use. For a City that is already “housing rich” and “jobs poor”, pressure from the region to further increase Alameda’s jobs/housing imbalance is not helpful. Although we recognize that the Core Concentration and Vision Scenarios are “unconstrained” and do not consider such constraints, at the local level, these constraints are very real and cannot be ignored. For these reasons the two unconstrained Scenarios rank very poorly from a local, Alameda perspective.

3. In building the alternative scenario housing distributions, ABAG considered several factors that are important to accommodating jobs and housing growth. Which do you feel are most important to your community or to the regional growth distribution? Please rate the factors below:

Alameda Staff 1/20/2012 Response:

Transit Service coverage and frequency: Extremely Important

Proximity to employment: Extremely important.

Provision of minimum amount of housing to accommodate natural growth within your community: Somewhat important.

Appropriate level of density for your PDA place type: Somewhat important

Workforce housing: Somewhat important

Other: *Another factor that needs to be considered is the importance of preserving land for employment generating, non-residential uses. Alameda is primarily a residential community that is working actively to recapture the jobs lost in the 1990s, preserve and enhance its maritime industry and operations, and maintain and grow its on-island job opportunities. To address the local economic needs of the community and address the local traffic constraints and associated air quality impacts (the outgoing commute congestion in the AM and incoming congestion in the PM), the challenge for Alameda is to replace our lost jobs.*

4. Which of the SCS Performance Targets and Equity Measures are most important to your jurisdiction? Please rank the choices (1=most important)

Alameda Staff 1/20/2012 Response:

Climate Protection:	1
Adequate Housing for Regions Population:	10
Reduction in deaths from Particulate Matters:	5
Reduction in Pedestrian Injuries/Fatalities:	6
Increase in Walking/Biking:	7
Open Space and Agriculture Preservation:	10
Reduction in Housing and Transportation Costs:	10
Increase Economic Vitality (Gross Regional Product):	4
Minimizing Displacement:	9
Reduction in VMT:	2
Reduction in Non-commute travel time:	8
Reduction in commute time:	3

5. Do you feel the transportation network assume in the scenario you chose is appropriate? Is the level of transit and transportation infrastructure in the three scenarios sufficient to support growth in your jurisdiction? If not, what is missing?

Alameda Staff 1/20/2012 Response:

The transportation network is not sufficient. The network between Alameda, Oakland, and San Francisco will need to be substantially improved and expanded to support the growth anticipated in any of the three constrained scenarios. The main island of Alameda and Harbor Bay/Bay Farm Island have limited access (three estuary bridges, the Posey/Webster Tubes, and Doolittle Drive/Bay Farm Island Bridge) to the regional transportation system. The estuary crossings and Tubes are reaching capacity and these routes require traveling through Oakland's local streets to access Interstates 880 and 980. In addition, the County CMA has listed access from the Posy Tube (State Route 260) to I-880 as a deficient street segment since 1999. While the two existing ferry terminals provide transportation access to the Ferry Building and Pier 41 in downtown San Francisco, the service provides limited transportation options for Alameda. To support the growth in any of the scenarios, a multi-modal transportation solution that addresses the deficiency at the State Route 260 segment to I-880 and the capacity constraints at the remaining crossings needed to be provided. The following transportation improvements are considered absolutely essential:

- 1. Improved access from the Posey Tube exit in Oakland to I-880, including addressing the congestion/queuing along 7th Street, Jackson Street, and the I-880 on-ramp, and reducing/eliminating the traffic weaving at northbound the I-880 and I-980 merge.*
- 2. Increased frequency (both headways and hours of operation) of AC Transit Service (including Express Bus Service) between Alameda and Oakland job centers and BART.*
- 3. Improved transit facilities, including dedicated lanes, queue jump lanes, and signal upgrades to provide faster, frequent and more convenient bus service on both the*

Alameda and Oakland side of the Estuary and to improve access to BART (12th Street and Fruitvale) from Alameda.

- 4. Increased frequency (both headways and hours of operation) of ferry services between Alameda and San Francisco and Peninsula job centers. Include provision for free MUNI and AC Transit transfer passes for ticket holders.*
- 5. Improved and new bicycle and pedestrian facilities between Alameda and Oakland. The current bicycle and pedestrian estuary crossings between Alameda and Oakland job centers are currently inadequate (especially the Posey Tube and Miller-Sweeney Bridge) and serve to actively discourage bicycling and walking to job centers in Oakland.*
- 6. Use of Intelligent Transportation System techniques to enhance capacity without widening the streets and provide emergency flash routes to address incidents on the freeway system and natural disasters.*
- 7. Replacement of the Miller-Sweeney Bridge to provide a Lifeline facility for transit, bicycles, pedestrians and automobiles to ensure the City can maintain basic services during a major seismic event or other disaster.*

Conclusions: Staff is inviting the public and the Planning Board to review and comment on the responses to ABAG and MTC survey and alternatives. Based upon the comments received, staff will revise, clarify or amend the responses and transmit them to ABAG/MTC immediately.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report is for information and comment. The financial impacts of any proposed changes to the Alameda Municipal Code will be evaluated at the time these changes are brought before the City Council.

MUNICIPAL CODE/POLICY DOCUMENT CROSS REFERENCE

The major City Code sections and policies that pertain to this issue include the City's General Plan policies to enhance and preserve existing neighborhoods, to promote appropriate mixed-use development of the Northern Waterfront and the former Naval Air Station, and the City of Alameda Local Action Plan for Climate Protection. As the regional agencies develop the detailed scenarios and final draft Sustainable Communities Strategy, staff will be able to provide a more detailed analysis of the relationship to the proposals and the City of Alameda's Municipal Code and policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Participation in the SCS is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and Comment on Staff's Preliminary Responses to the Regional Sustainable Communities Strategy – Alternative Scenarios.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Thomas
Planning Services Manager

Exhibit:

1. May 27, 2011 Letter from Acting City Manager Lisa Goldman on Initial Vision Scenario.
2. Summary Description of the Alternative Scenarios
3. Summary Evaluation of the Alternative Scenarios